

Ellington employee makes the call, saves coworker's life

When a coworker began pressing his hand against his chest, Terry Lee-Lamkins immediately knew something was wrong.

Her visitor, Larry Valenta, had entered her office visibly perspiring even though it was a cool November day at Ellington

Valenta accepted the aspirin and headed for a water fountain, but had to ask for some assistance to return to her familiar cubicle. At that time, Valenta conceded that something was “not right.”

“My chest had started hurting during the walk to her office, but I had just returned



NASA JSC Photo JSC2000E09315 by Robert Markowitz

Ellington Field emergency personnel came to the aid of Larry Valenta when he experienced a near-fatal heart attack late last year. Shown here are paramedics Monty Cartwright, left, and Oscar Franklin, right, key players in the emergency response, with Valenta. Not pictured: Bo Atkinson, Don Williams and Jessie Alexander who also assisted with the rescue.

Field. When he had called only a few minutes earlier, Lee-Lamkins thought she had detected some oddity in the conversation and, when she saw him, a sense of déjà vu overcame her.

She was with her father in their front yard when he suffered a stroke. Although a stroke and a heart attack are not the same, the memory came flooding back as she watched Valenta indicatively rubbing his chest.

Valenta insisted he was okay and just needed her to sign some documents, but Lee-Lamkins was hesitant and delayed their encounter by asking him rudimentary questions about the paperwork.

“I noticed straight-away that he was sweating heavily and was increasingly out of breath,” said Lee-Lamkins. “I thought to myself, well, I’ll give him some aspirin and see if he can make it to the water fountain.”

from lunch and thought it was maybe from that,” said Valenta. “I could feel the perspiration just rolling off of me and I just wanted to get out of there, but Terry kept talking and asking questions about the software modification. That’s when it started

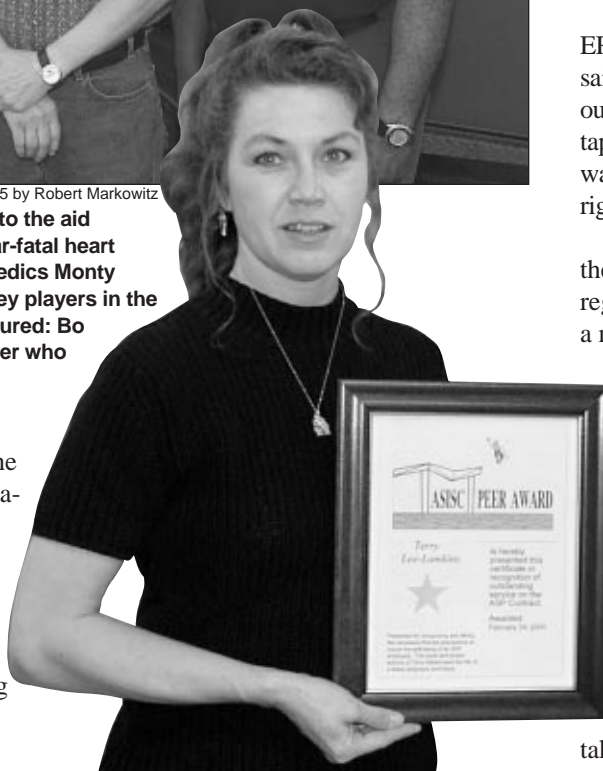


Photo by Nicole Cloutier

Terry Lee-Lamkins holds her Peer Recognition Award, for her lifesaving actions during a coworker's heart attack.

getting really bad but I still didn’t want to call anybody. I was thinking, ‘What if it isn’t really anything?’ I’d be getting all these people involved for nothing.”

Lee-Lamkins, however, wasn’t taking any chances. Even though he was reluctant to solicit any help, she made the call.

“I said, ‘Larry, this call is more for me than it is for you,’” explained Lee-Lamkins. “I needed some help and I tried to keep presence of mind because I knew what was transpiring.”

Lee-Lamkins called the Ellington Field firehouse and told them who she was, where she was, the situation and that she needed assistance immediately.

Emergency personal arrived at the site within minutes and took Valenta to Clear Lake Regional Hospital where he underwent quadruple bypass surgery.

“I remember hearing the doctor in the ER saying, ‘Oh, yeah – it’s a heart attack,’” said Valenta, who had exercised for years out at Ellington’s workout facility but had tapered off last year. “I was thinking no way – he doesn’t have the leads on right – something’s messed up.”

Valenta was walking within hours of the surgery and he now maintains a strict regimen of walking three miles a day and a much healthier diet.

“It was a religious experience,” added Valenta. “You always hear all the

things that you are supposed to do to take care of yourself, but when it happens to you, that is when you believe.”

Doctors have since told Valenta that his type of heart attack, one with few early symptoms, was especially dangerous. They estimate that without Lee-Lamkin’s quick action, he likely would have had a 1 in 10,000 chance of surviving the episode.

“We were impressed that his coworkers had recognized that there was a problem and didn’t just assume it

was indigestion,” said Oscar Franklin, a paramedic at the scene who commended the workers for being on their toes when his team arrived. “It’s extremely helpful when we get there and we can get an update on the patient’s condition and know that immediate relatives have already been notified.”

“The NASA team deserves a pat on the back,” said Bo Atkinson, assistant fire chief, Ellington Field, who also responded to Lee-Lamkins’ call.

“They’ve made safety such a priority and always seem really caring about each other, providing the emergency response teams with courtesy and respect.”

The American Red Cross honored Lee-Lamkins with a medal as one of their Everyday Heroes recently for her action. Lee-Lamkins, who received CPR certification as an aerobic instructor 15 years ago and has maintained it ever since as part of the AOD flight crew, says her advice to others is “make the call, especially if you are not sure what is really going on.”

Valenta’s care team offers the following suggestions to prevent and respond to cardiac emergencies.

- Call for help first. On site dial x33333, at Ellington dial x44444 and at home or away, dial 911.
- Check to see if the patient has a history of heart complications and if they are allergic to aspirin. If available, give them two aspirin (such as Bayer Children’s Formula™ or other children’s chewables, not Advil™ or other ibuprofen medications.)
- If you can’t determine that

the symptoms indicate a heart complication or might be the result of indigestion or heartburn, don’t take chances – make the call.

- To minimize your risk of heart problems, exercise regularly, keep your weight and blood pressure low and enjoy a healthy, low fat diet.

Franklin adds, “If the pressure is radiating from your chest outward, or if it can not be relieved by resting, then it potentially is a cardiac emergency and requires immediate medical attention.” ■

“When he began rubbing his chest, it was a dead giveaway.”

–Terry Lee-Lamkins

Technology Expo attracts leading hardware, software companies

The second annual ODIN Alliance Technology Expo hosted by OAO was held at the Gilruth Center on March 30 and 31, and it was a huge success. More than 800 people attended the event, which included 20 computer vendors and JSC civil servants and

contractors. Compaq, Apple, Microsoft, HP, Sun, Siemens and Cisco where just some of the vendors who participated with booths at the show. Everyone who attended was able to see the latest and greatest in computer technology for the year 2000.

This year’s expo included “break-out” sessions upstairs at the Gilruth Center. These sessions were especially popular, with hands-on demonstrations and more detailed classes where the vendors were able to reach groups of people who wanted to learn more about a specific

product or software/hardware. There were even training sessions available, which included Excel and Powerpoint.

Overall, the ODIN Alliance Technology Expo 2000 was a fun and informative way to learn more about what is available for JSC through the ODIN contract. ■



NASA JSC Photo JSC2000-09926 by James Blair

Linda Sweeney, OAO Odin, shows Scott Rosenbaum, ISD, a personal data assistant (Palm Pilot) at the OAO/Odin Alliance booth.



NASA JSC Photo JSC2000-09927 by James Blair

Cathleen Vacek, Sun Microsystems, talks with James Dawson at the Sun Microsystems booth.